

Graduates of Living Skills Program of a Malaysian Public University: A Tracer Study

Ahmad M. Sharif*, Tee Tze Kiong, Nor Asimah Zakaria, Maria Salih

Faculty of Technical and Vocational
Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: ahmad.sharif1950@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this tracer study was to determine the competence and the satisfaction of the graduates of a living skills program at one of the public universities in Malaysia. The study was also intended to determine the relationship between competency and job satisfaction of the respondents and to prepare a profile of living skills teachers. A set of questionnaires consisting of two major constructs — competency and job satisfaction were adapted from *Standard Guru Malaysia* (Malaysian Teachers Standard) and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. A sample of 185 living skills teachers was selected from a population of 370 teachers using systematic random sampling. Ninety-seven teachers responded, giving a response rate of 52.4 percent. The teachers reported that they are competent in various aspects of teaching living skills namely, content knowledge, teaching practical skills, professional knowledge and teaching profession. However, they lack knowledge and skills in certain topics such as automotive maintenance, nursery management, animal care, fashion design and dress making. The findings also show that the mean scores in intrinsic factors were much higher than extrinsic factors for job satisfaction. Also, this study indicated a moderate relationship ($r=0.485$) between teacher's competency and job satisfaction. The finding implies that some necessary measures should be taken to improve the present pre- and in-service training with particular emphasis toward curriculum implementation, professional development and job enrichment.

Keywords: Living skills, tracer study, job satisfaction, competency, Malaysian public university

INTRODUCTION

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is important in human capital development of a country. In Malaysia, the government has launched Vocational Education Transformation Plan on the 6th of January 2012. In the transformation plan, the existing technical and vocational schools are upgraded to vocational colleges and offer courses that are modularized and competency-based in nature as to make graduates more marketable and employable in job market. At a lower secondary school level, the existing Living Skills subject was reviewed and renamed as Design and Technology subject or RBT (*Reka Bentuk Teknologi*). With its first launching in the year 2017, the new curriculum will be in full implementation in the year 2019. The new curriculum is more technology-oriented, creativity-driven and modularized. Before the introduction of RBT, “*Kemahiran Hidup*” or Living Skills is a compulsory prevocational subject aiming at inculcating technological literacy, economic awareness and self-management among lower secondary and primary school students through hands-on experience in areas such as technology, agriculture, home economics and business and entrepreneurship. In terms of the training of teachers for Living Skills subject, several universities and institutes of teacher education have offered such program.

The aim of this study was to conduct a tracer study involving novice Living Skills teachers graduated from a public university. The university offers a Bachelor of Education (Living Skills), a Bachelor of Education (Agricultural Science) and a Bachelor of Education (Home Economics). At the

university, the Living Skills program was launched with its first intake in December 2004. Its first batch comprised 100 students followed by the second and third batches of 50 and 220 students, respectively. Teachers graduated from these programs were mostly hired as teachers at lower secondary national schools to teach Living Skills subject. To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, a tracer study was conducted to obtain graduates' feedback that may provide useful input for future improvement of the program.

Based on the past research, Living Skills teachers in this country encountered several challenges during the subject's early implementation to meet the requirements particularly pertaining to staffing, facilities coupled with the increasing enrolment of students. A pertinent question to ask: (a) Do graduates of Living Skills program able to meet the criteria of competency as stipulated in the Malaysian Teachers Standard? and (b) Are they satisfied with their present teaching job? This tracer study was an attempt to examine two major aspects — competence and job satisfaction of the Living Skills teachers who are being placed at various schools for the past one to three years.

A good pre-service teacher training program in public institutions of higher learning is expected to produce excellent graduates, which in turn, provides high impact on teaching and learning in the schools. The effectiveness of pre-service training of Living Skills teachers could be measured by the competence of graduates and their satisfaction toward teaching. Indicators of their competency and job satisfaction are invaluable input for the institutions of higher learning and the Ministry of Education to make improvements of the existing pre- and in-service teacher training programs. The importance of producing quality teachers is manifested through the formulation and development of the Malaysian Teachers Standard or "*Standard Guru Malaysia*" launched in 2009 by the Ministry of Education as a benchmarking for measuring teachers' competency.

It is a challenging task for any institution of higher learning to produce high quality graduates who can fulfill the needs of the teaching profession and hence the nation's aspiration. Yusnita (2003) reported that one of the challenging issues facing education system in Malaysia is to produce competent teachers, who can perform well in their teaching-learning activities. To what extent the teacher training program is successful in producing teachers who are committed in performing their tasks is usually related to the effectiveness of their pre-service program that teachers have undergone (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Lack of competence in a subject matter and poor employability skills among graduates of institutions of higher learning has become a national issue in the world of work. The announcement of the failure of English teachers to meet minimum requirements of the Cambridge Placement Test by the previous Minister of Education II has attracted public attention. Several studies and reports have revealed that some graduates could not be absorbed in the market as they lack competence and employability skills as required by the employers (Mohd Yusof, 2013). As the country's skilled and competent workers constitutes about 28% of the 3.3 million of the labor force, Malaysia is targeting 50% of its labor force made up of skilled and competent workers by the year 2020 (Leong, 2013).

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to conduct a tracer study involving novice Living Skills teachers graduated from one public university. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- (a) To identify the level of competency of Living Skills teachers based on the Malaysian Teachers Standard
- (b) To identify the level of job satisfaction among the Living Skills teachers
- (c) To determine the relationship between teachers' competency and job satisfaction of the Living Skills teachers
- (d) To prepare a profile of novice Living Skills teachers

PAST RESEARCH

Competence can be defined as the capacity to use and apply knowledge, skills, abilities and personal attributes to implement tasks, work and special functions with success (Dubois, 1993; Lucia & Lepsinger, 1993; Michelle, 2008). Competence is a blend of knowledge, ability, attitude and commitment enabling someone to perform tasks and complete a job effectively. Danielson (1996) who made an analysis of teaching and learning concludes that four major domains that a competent teacher should possess and do namely, planning and preparation, creating positive classroom climate, managing teaching-learning process and carrying professional responsibility. As novice teachers, they are required to acquire pedagogical and professional knowledge in order to become competent teachers (Shulman, 1987). Several past studies reported that competency of Living Skills teachers were moderate. Azizi (1999) found that objectives of Living Skills subject were not achieved and some teachers are not competent to handle the subject. Hajar (2006) echoed similar results and suggested that follow-up measures should be taken to rectify the situations. Another study involving newly-appointed technical and vocational teachers found that the level of their content and pedagogical knowledge was moderate while their social interaction skills was high (Norlaila et al., 2011). Another study by Ahmad et al. (2012) revealed that the level of content knowledge, practical and teaching skills among graduating teachers of Living Skills program from one public university was moderate. Lang and Evans (2006) have the opinion that to create effective teachers in teaching-learning nexus, teachers should be competent in main aspects of teaching-learning process.

Job satisfaction as another focus of this study refers to the pleasant personal emotions or conditions as a result of one's perception toward work (Locke, 1976). Schneider and Synder (1975) stated that job satisfaction is one's evaluation toward situations in work place. According to Herzberg et al. (1959), job satisfaction constitutes two major dimensions — motivator and hygiene. Motivator refers to intrinsic factors or “work itself” such as recognition, self-actualization, moral values and achievements while hygiene includes extrinsic factors such as salary, policy, facilities at work and promotions. Kallenberg (1977) concluded that five main aspects that influence job satisfaction are intrinsic factors, facilities, finances, co-workers, career and resources. Striving for job satisfaction at work place is crucial to every worker because it contributes all aspects of work performance. Early study by Ahmad (1989) using MSQ-long form involving 225 vocational teachers in Malaysia showed that the level of general job satisfaction of teachers was low. It was also found that their scores in intrinsic factors were much higher than extrinsic factors. Another study on job satisfaction involving teachers in Federal Territory reported that three-quarters of them felt dissatisfied with their working conditions and superior-subordinate relationship (Chun & Aminuddin, 2012). Regarding competency-job satisfaction relationship, Suryanarayana and Goteti (2010) found that competency in teaching was related to job satisfaction among elementary and secondary school teachers.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of Living Skills teachers who obtained their first placement at secondary schools in the year 2010 and onward. Using a systematic random sampling, 185 respondents were selected from 370 teachers in peninsular Malaysia. Out of 185 teachers, 97 teachers responded, giving a response rate of 52.4%. This study used a survey research design. Survey questionnaires accompanied by self-addressed and stamped envelopes were first mailed in February 2013. Two reminder letters were mailed within two weeks interval to non-respondents. Names, school addresses and telephone numbers of the teachers were obtained from the state education departments. Telephone calls were also made to the non-respondents.

Instrumentation

Essentially, this study focused on two dimensions – competency and job satisfaction. A set of questionnaires was used as the research instrument in this study. The instrument consisted of three parts. Part A: Respondents’ demographics included gender, marital status, school location, year of placement, place of study, teacher’s category, cumulative grade point average and teaching load. Part B: Competency comprised knowledge of educational theories, content knowledge, practical skills, teaching skills and professionalism. Part C: Job satisfaction consisted of recognition, policy and school leadership, integrity, promotion, supervision, co-workers, salary, achievement and facilities at work place. The conceptual framework of the study was formulated based on the Malaysian Teachers Standard and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (see Figure 1).

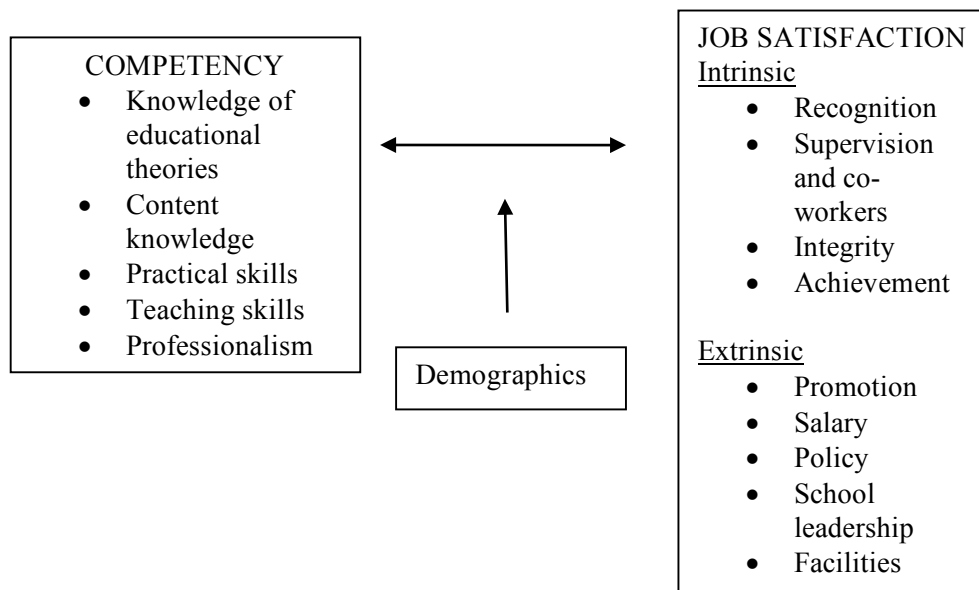


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study

Three out of five sub-constructs of competency – knowledge of educational theories, teaching skills and professionalism were taken from the Malaysian Teachers Standard produced by the Ministry of Education while the other two sub-constructs – content knowledge and practical skills were derived from the content analysis of the Living Skills curriculum. As for job satisfaction, seven sub-constructs were adapted from *the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire* (Weiss et al., 1967) and one construct – integrity component was constructed based on the relevant literature. The eight sub-constructs of job satisfaction were categorized broadly as intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors constitute four constructs namely recognition, integrity, supervision and achievement while the rest were classified as extrinsic factors. The validity of the instruments was affirmed by three experts from Ministry of Education, *Universiti Putra Malaysia* and *Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris*.

Data analyses

Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 19 was used to analyze the empirical data. The alpha level was set *a priori* at 0.05. Frequencies, percentages, t-test, ANOVA and multiple regression were the descriptive and inferential statistics used in this study. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients of competency and job satisfaction were 0.97 and 0.96, respectively.

FINDINGS

Demographics

Majority of the respondents were females (81.4%) and the rest were males (8.6%). Three-quarters of them (75.3%) were married. Slightly more than half of the teachers (58.7%) are teaching in urban and semi-urban schools as compared to 22 teachers (41.3%) who taught at rural schools. Out of 97 respondents, more than half of them (53.6%) obtained their placement in the Year 2010, followed by Year 2012 (42.0%), Year 2011 (8.2%) and Year 2013 (6.2%). More than half of respondents (56.7%) graduated from *Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris* while the rest (43.3%) obtained their degrees from other universities such as *Universiti Teknologi Malaysia*, *Universiti Putra Malaysia* and *Universiti Tun Hussien Onn*. Majority of the teachers (70.0%) obtained their first degree in Year 2010 and before, while the others (30.0%) graduated in Year 2011 and beyond. Three-quarters of the teachers (75.3%) were graduates with a bachelor degree in education while the rest (24.7%) possessed post-graduate qualifications such as *Diploma Pendidikan Lulusan Ijazah* and *Kursus Pendidikan Lulusan Ijazah*. More than two-thirds of the teachers pursued Living Skills program as their major (67.0%) while others took specific technical and vocational programs such as Home Science, Commerce, Agricultural Science and Commerce. As for their academic results, almost half of 94 respondents (48.8%) attained Cumulative Grade Point Average of 3.5 and above. In terms of the work load, teachers teaching two subjects formed the majority (38.2%), followed by those handling three subjects (36.1%) and one subject (23.7%). More than two-thirds of them (68.0%) handled more than seven classes while the rest (32.0%) managed six classes and below. As for teaching periods, majority of them (77.3%) were given 17-25 periods per week followed by those handling above 26 periods per week (15.5%). Only seven teachers (7.2%) handled 8-16 periods. As for curricular activities, teachers' involvement in clubs (40.2%) and uniformed groups (39.2%) formed the majority compared to their participation in athletics (19.6%). Out of 79 teachers responded to item "attending courses", majority of them (76.0%) have attended 1-2 courses while 19 of them (24.0%) have undergone 3-4 courses. Only 35 out of 97 teachers (36.1%) responded to item "attending workshops," out of which 31 teachers (88.6%) attended 1-2 workshops. As for item "attending seminar" only five responded and all of them have attended only one seminar.

Objective 1: To identify the level of competency of Living Skills teachers based on the Malaysian Teachers Standard

Based on the respondents' feedback, overall level of competency of Living Skills teachers was high (M=3.98). All five sub-constructs measuring competency exhibited high level (Table 1). Among the five sub-constructs, the mean score for teaching professionalism attained the highest (M=4.33) while practical skills showed the lowest (M=3.64).

Table 1: Mean scores for teachers' competency

Competency sub-constructs	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of Competency
Overall	97	3.98	.46	High
Knowledge in education	97	3.89	.52	High
Content knowledge	97	3.87	.56	High
Practical skills	97	3.64	.57	High
Teaching skills	97	4.15	.54	High
Teaching professionalism	97	4.33	.55	Very High

n=97. Levels of competency according to mean score: Very low = 1.00-1.80; Low = 1.81-2.60; Moderate = 2.61-3.40; High = 3.41- 4.20; Very high = 4.21-5.00 (Nunnally, 1978)

Analyzing each item, these five items have high mean scores:

1. I am involved in school co-curricular activities (M=4.47)
2. I am concerned about students' achievement (M=4.47)
3. I abide by the school procedures and rules (M=4.44)
4. I demonstrate pleasant personality (M= 4.39)
5. I interact with the students (M=4.32)

However, these five competencies recorded low mean scores:

1. Automotive maintenance (M=2.77)
2. Animal treatment (M=3.10)
3. Nursery management (M=3.43)
4. Fashion design (M=3.49)
5. Dress making (M=3.52)

Objective 2: To identify the level of job satisfaction among Living Skills teachers

Overall, Living Skills teachers in this study were satisfied with their present job (M=3.21). They were also satisfied with the other eight constructs/facets of job satisfaction as indicated in Table 2. Among the eight sub-constructs measured, mean score for integrity attained the highest (M=3.52) and mean score for facilities at work place exhibited the lowest (M=3.06).

Table 2: Mean scores for job satisfaction of teachers

Job satisfaction dimension	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of job satisfaction
1. Integrity	3.53	.38	Satisfied
2. Achievement	3.27	.44	Satisfied
3. Promotion	3.25	.47	Satisfied
4. Salary and allowance	3.22	.54	Satisfied
5. Supervision and co-workers	3.18	.54	Satisfied
6. Recognition	3.13	.49	Satisfied
7. Policy and leadership	3.10	.57	Satisfied
8. Facilities at work place	3.07	.52	Satisfied

n=97, total average = 3.21. Levels of job satisfaction according to mean scores: Dissatisfied = 1.00-2.00; Moderately satisfied = 2.01-3.00; Satisfied = 3.01-4.00; Very Satisfied = 4.01-5.00 (Nunnaly, 1978)

Two sub-constructs categorized as intrinsic factors that have high mean scores were integrity (M=3.52) and the achievement (M=3.26). In contrast, the sub-constructs that obtained low mean scores were policy and leadership (M=3.10) and facilities at work place (M=3.06) which are grouped as extrinsic factors. In addition, the five items that obtained the high mean scores are:

1. Teaching profession as a noble job (M=3.75)
2. Teacher's task as devoted practice (M=3.64)
3. Competitive work prospects (M=3.53)
4. Providing best services (M=3.50)
5. Work without self-interest (M=3.44)

However, the five items gained the low mean scores are:

1. School administrators are creative (M=2.88)
2. Teaching aids (M=2.94)
3. School leadership initiatives toward solving staff problem (M=2.96)
4. Conditions and cleanliness of the classrooms (M=3.02)

5. School policy influences teachers’ professionalism (M=3.04)

Objective 3: To determine relationship between teachers’ competency and job satisfaction of Living Skills teachers

Based on the Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient, the relationship between teachers’ competency and their job satisfaction was found to be significant and positive ($r=0.48$). This relationship is considered moderately strong. Relationships among sub-constructs of both competency and job satisfaction are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Relationships among constructs of both competency and job satisfaction dimensions

Competency /Job Satisfaction	Job Satisfaction	Recognition	Policy and Leadership	Promotion	Super- vision and Co- workers	Salary	Achievement	Facilities at work place	
Competency	r	.49	.48	.45	.44	.38	.25	.43	.49
	Sig.	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*
Pedagogical Content	r	.40	.41	.37	.33	.30	.21	.39	.43
	Sig.	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.04*	.00*	.00*
Content Knowledge	r	.32	.31	.29	.33	.25	.15	.26	.33
	Sig.	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.02*	.16	.01*	.00*
Practical Skills	r	.28	.34	.29	.23	.26	.08	.24	.27
	Sig.	.00*	.00*	.00*	.03*	.01*	.41	.02*	.00*
Teaching Skills	r	.53	.51	.47	.47	.40	.30	.48	.55
	Sig.	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*
Teaching Professionalism	r	.50	.45	.44	.50	.37	.30	.45	.45
	Sig.	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*	.00*

Note: *Correlations (r) are significant at 0.05. Interpretations of correlation coefficients: Very weak = 0.00-0.19; Weak = 0.20-0.39; Moderately strong = 0.40-0.59; Strong = 0.60-0.79; Very strong = 0.80-1.00. All sub-constructs of both dimensions were found to be to significantly related except salary and content knowledge, salary and practical skills. However, majority of the relationships are weak (0.20-0.39) and moderately strong (0.40-0.59)

These constructs obtained high correlation coefficient:

1. Teaching skills and facilities at work place ($r=0.55$)
2. Job satisfaction and teaching skills ($r=0.53$)
3. Teaching skills and recognition ($r=0.51$)

Nevertheless, these constructs exhibited low correlation coefficient:

1. Promotions and practical skills ($r=0.23$)
2. Achievements and practical skills ($r=0.24$)
3. Competency and salary & allowance ($r=0.25$)
4. Practical skills and supervision and co-workers ($r=0.26$)
5. Practical skills and job satisfaction ($r=0.28$)

Objective 4: To prepare a profile of Living Skills teachers

The following profile of Living Skills teachers participated in this study was prepared based on the research findings involving novice teachers graduated from a public university:

1. Placement of the respondents at urban and rural schools was evenly distributed. Majority of them are females (81.4%) and married (76.3%).
2. Two-thirds of the respondents pursued Living Skills as their major while the others were majoring in home science and agricultural science.
3. Almost half (46.4%) of the respondents graduated with CGPA 3.5 and above.
4. Almost two-thirds of the respondents taught seven classes and above. More than three-quarters of Living Skills teachers (77.3%) were given 17-25 teaching periods per week.
5. Majority of the respondents (79.4%) involved in co-curricular activities (clubs and uniform groups). Almost two-thirds of the Living Skills teachers (61.8%) have attended 1-2 courses such as school-based assessment, induction, school cooperatives and text book loan scheme.
6. Only a few of them have participated 1-2 workshops pertaining to course work, data analyses, asset management, electricity and electronics. Only a fraction of them participated in seminars such as innovation and invention and school cooperatives.
7. Level of competency of the respondents was high in these areas — educational knowledge, pedagogy, and teaching professionalism. However, they still need to improve in content knowledge and practical skills particularly in automotive maintenance, animal treatment, nursery management, fashion design and dress making.
8. The respondents are satisfied with their job especially from intrinsic aspects such as teaching profession as a respectable job, devoted practice, and giving sincere service. However, they expressed concerns regarding weaknesses in school policy and leadership, and inefficiency of the management in solving staff problems.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Competency of the teachers

The key finding of this study revealed that competency of Living Skills teachers as measured using the Malaysian Teachers Standard was found to be high in all six sub-constructs. Two sub-constructs achieved the higher mean scores were teaching professionalism (M=4.33) and teaching skills (M=4.15) while practical skills (M=3.64) and content knowledge of Living Skills (M=3.87) indicated the lower mean scores. Two items obtained top mean scores were participation in co-curricular activities (M=4.47) and concerns toward students' achievements (M=4.47). However, teachers reported that they still needed to improve in certain skills such as automotive maintenance (M=2.77), animal treatment (M=3.10), nursery management (M=3.43), fashion design (M=3.49) and dress making (M=3.52).

Teaching professionalism and teaching skills that gained the higher scores, are undoubtedly the essential tasks and responsibilities of a teacher. Teaching professionalism covers (a) teachers' images, (b) teachers' involvement in seeking knowledge, (c) teachers' co-curricular activities, (d) teachers' concerns toward students' achievements, and (e) teachers' compliance with the school procedures and rules. Teaching skills constitute (a) planning and preparation of teaching, (b) implementation of teaching and learning process, (c) management of classroom, and (d) assessment. The key findings of this study support Danielson (1996)'s model of competency for effective teachers. These findings are

also in line with Yusnita (2003)'s study who found that planning, implementation and assessment are essential competencies of a teacher. However, the earlier study involving final-year students pursuing Living Skills program at *Sultan Idris Education University* (Ahmad et al., 2012) found that their levels of content knowledge, practical skills and teaching skills were moderate. This result is logical as student teachers were still in universities without much real teaching experience.

Job satisfaction

Teachers reported that they are satisfied with their jobs ($M=3.22$). They indicated that they are satisfied with all the eight sub-constructs of job satisfaction. Two sub-constructs — integrity ($M=3.52$) and achievements ($M=3.26$) which belong to intrinsic factors, gained the top mean scores. However, the other two constructs — school policy and leadership ($M=3.10$) and facilities at work place ($M=3.06$) categorized as extrinsic factors obtained the lower mean scores. It was also found that five items which showed the higher mean scores belonged to intrinsic factors while the five lower mean scores belonged to extrinsic factors. These results are in line with earlier study by Ahmad (1989) who found that vocational teachers were more satisfied with their intrinsic factors than their extrinsic factors. These findings support the Motivator-Hygiene theory by Herzberg et al. (1959) which explained that intrinsic factors influence one's satisfaction toward work while extrinsic factors are causes for job dissatisfaction. Several studies of job satisfaction among academic staff in Malaysia have shown that their level of job satisfaction was low and moderate (Fauziah & Kamaruzzaman, 2007; Ling, 2009; Mustapha, 2009). Studies in Pakistan and the Philippines (Usop et al., 2013) also found similar results.

This study revealed that the level of job satisfaction of novice Living Skills teachers is generally higher as compared to mixed results (low and moderate) of earlier studies in Malaysia. This might be due to novice Living Skills teachers who are new in school system tend to have positive and less critical view toward what they have experienced and exposed as compared to their more experienced counterparts. Furthermore, intrinsically satisfied novice Living Skills teachers are more concerned with "altruism" that is — what they can contribute to their teaching profession rather than what they can gain materially from the job.

Relationship between competency and job satisfaction

In addition, the results of this study indicated that all sub-constructs of competency and job satisfaction are significantly and positively related to one another even though their relationships are either weak or moderately strong. This is in line with the more recent studies involving elementary and secondary school teachers (Saryanarayan & Goteti, 2012; Gupta & Mir, 2013; Usop et al., 2013). Nevertheless, relationships between salary and content knowledge, and salary and practical skills in this study were found to be insignificant.

Three relationships that show high correlation coefficients were teaching skills and facilities at work place ($r=0.55$), job satisfaction and teaching skills ($r=0.53$) and finally, teaching skills and recognition ($r=0.51$). The results indicated teaching is a profession that emphasizes teaching competency as its utmost important entity. The higher the level of teaching skills, the more satisfied he or she toward one's job. It also implies that good facilities at work place may improve teaching skills of Living Skills teachers. Highly skilled teachers tend to be more job-satisfied as compared to mediocre teachers. And, the more equipped the workshop is, the more effective will be the teachers in handling teaching-learning process. In addition, recognition is also important for Living Skills teachers in order for them to improve their teaching skills. Furthermore, Living Skills as a technology-based subject that requires hands-on activities. However, the findings of this study are not in congruent with another study involving excellent teachers in Malaysia (Hoque et al., 2012). This particular study did not show significant relationship between job satisfaction of teachers with pedagogical content. However, relationship between job satisfaction and management style, teaching objectives and recognition tend to be significant.

Profile of Living Skills teachers

This profile was prepared based on the sample of novice Living Skills teachers who were placed at schools from the year 2010 onwards. The majority of the Living Skills teachers are females and married. Majority of them pursued Living Skills as a major at *Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris* and most of them graduated with Cumulative Grade Point Average of 3.5 and above. Most of them taught

2-3 different subjects involving seven classes and teaching load of 17-20 periods per week. They too, like any other experienced teachers, participated in co-curricular activities. Since they are newly appointed teachers, their involvement in workshops, courses and seminar is limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Institutions of higher learning as a major training provider of Living Skills teachers should review the existing courses in which the Living Skills teachers admitted that they are weak such as in these courses: automotive maintenance, nursery management, animal care, fashion design and dress making. The Ministry of Education should also review the in-service training program particularly in upgrading teachers' knowledge and skills in the above-mentioned courses. In addition, more Living Skills teachers should be allowed to attend relevant seminars or professional development courses.
2. As the infrastructure, facilities and cleanliness gained low mean score, it is an appropriate initiative for the universities concerned and the schools to upgrade their teaching and learning facilities.
3. School administrators and teachers should be more creative in implementing teaching strategies especially in Living Skills course.
4. School administrators should be more efficient in solving teachers and staff problems.
5. This study was conducted based on the perceptions of new Living Skills teachers. To obtain broader sampling frame, senior teachers should be involved. Samples from Sabah and Sarawak should also be included.
6. Besides competency, future study should explore other factors that could influence job satisfaction of the teachers.
7. To obtain more reliable results about competency and job satisfaction of Living Skills teachers, other methods are recommended such as observations, interviews and formative assessments

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